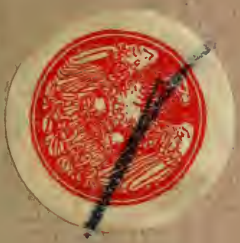
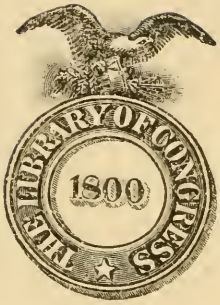
PS
3545
E523H4
1919



WINIFRED WELLES

The HESITANT HEART

NEW YORK: B. W. HUEBSCH



Class PS3545
Book .E52.3H4
Copyright No. 1919

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

The Hesitant Heart

WINIFRED WELLES

The HESITANT HEART



New York B. W. HUEBSCH *Mcmxix*

COPYRIGHT, 1919, BY B. W. HUEBSCH
PRINTED IN U. S. A.

PS3545
.E523H4
1919

APR 24 1920

©CI.A565664

Some of these poems were first printed in the North American Review, The Century, The Liberator, The Smart Set, The Madrigal, The Poetry Journal and Contemporary Verse, to which due acknowledgment is made.

Contents

The Hesitant Heart 9
From a Chinese Vase 10
School 11
The Unfaithful April 12
Five O'clock 13
Loud Youth 14
Snowfall 15
Humiliation 16
Idyll 17
Cobweb 18
To Narcissus 19
One Voice 20
Driftwood 21
Windows 22
In Love 23
Variation 24
Hail and Farewell 25
Plaint 26
The Violin 27
Keepsake 28
A Child's Song to Her Mother 29
Threnody 30

Two Songs of Bitterness 31
To a Mocking-Bird 33
Gesture 34
Language 35
A Tree at Dawn 36
A Tree at Dusk 37
Love Song from New England 38
Trespasser 39
Moonflower 40
Surf 41
The Misers 42
Lifetime 43
Communion 44
Talisman 45
Sympathy 46
Nocturne 47
The Child 48
My Heart Can't Break 49
Portrait of a Lady at the Piano 50
I've Lived so Long 51
Realities 53
Setting for a Fairy Story 54
Climb 56

The Hesitant Heart

No, I shall never climb above the hill,
But, wistful, pause halfway and take my fill
 Of wondering —
Behind me lies the valley, hot and still,
 A roof-scarred thing.

If, like a lagging cloud with slow, white feet,
I should surmount the hill, would I then greet
 The spray-wreathed sea?
And would the eager winds blow keen and sweet
 Up, up to me?

Halfway, my craven heart shall ever bide,
Content in hoping that the other side
 Shines on a silver shore,
Yet fearful lest the high hills only hide
 More vale — and nothing more.

From a Chinese Vase

Roaming the lonely garden, he and I
Pursue each other to the fountain's brim,
And there grow quiet — woman and butterfly —
The frail clouds beckon me, the flowers tempt him.

My thoughts are rose-like, beautiful and bright,
Folded precise as petals are, and wings
Uplift my dreaming suddenly in flight,
And fill my soul with jagged colorings.

The waters tangle like a woman's hair
Above the dim reflection of a face —
He thinks those are his own lips laughing there,
His own breasts curving under silk and lace.

How shall we know our real selves, he and I,
Which is the woman, which the butterfly?

School

His seat was by a window. So he dreamed.
How could he study while the sunlight gleamed
In small, sweet shapes, like wild things tame enough
To dart to him and touch his hands for love?
While there were profiles carved in every cloud
To mark as grim or ludicrous or proud,
And agile shadowings to writhe and crawl
Like ghostly spiders up and down the wall,
He could not help but turn their way to look.
His eyes, that would not follow down his book
The muddy trudgings of deliberate words,
Reflected blue and silver flights of birds.
You would not think there was so much to trace
Of wonderment on just a window space.
But once, when a frail scrap of paper moon
Enchanted him from ten o'clock till noon,
They moved him to the middle of the room.
He learned his lesson then for very gloom,
Until, came glowing to a nearby chair,
A little girl with sunset in her hair.
His soul recolored. The forlorn dreams came
To warm themselves once more at this new flame.
He pushed aside the dusty Greek. He had
A different way to read the Iliad.
While through cold ashes others groped to learn,
He lit the towers of Troy and saw them burn.

The Unfaithful April

I saw a robin last year,
 I heard him fill his throat
High in the trembling elm tree
 With note on gallant note.

So splendidly his red breast
 Went flashing in the dew,
I thought beneath his glad wings
 His heart had broken through.

I hear the robin this year,
 His voice is sweet and strong,
But I can not give him welcome
 Nor listen to his song.

How can he bear the new leaves
 Around his last year's nest?
How can he sing with old wounds
 Still red upon his breast?

Five o'Clock

Let us go far away from buttered toast,
And tea, and marmalade, and all of it.
The feathered jostling of their hats, the wit
Unhumorous — I can not bear this host
Of warm, sweet women! Everything offends.
The murmurous movement of each gleaming bead,
Sly laughter on soft lips that do not feed
So much on tea as on their absent friends.

I knew you understood because your eyes
Were beckoning across the crowd to me,
Oh Child, who have so strangely learned to be
Unconsciously, mysteriously wise!
We went away, unnoticed, from the room
Into the drip of slow, autumnal rain,
And laughed, and drew deep breath, and laughed again,
We were so glad to leave that candled gloom.

Through the wet dusk the leaves came fluttering —
I felt one falling softly on my head
As I leaned down to kiss you and you said
Adorably, "You're such a dear old thing!"

Loud Youth

There is a great, sweet golden bell in me —
It has a chime of flame, a flame so bright
I seem to walk forever in its light,
As gods do in their immortality.
Such a tremendous joy would come to be,
That chains would turn to wreaths of blowing white,
And crutches drop for wings to flare in flight,
If I could ring the bell that is in me.

Oh if I could! The stars would shake — and suns
And moons collapse, and the hollow ways of death
Fill with enough of echo to revive
Such restlessness among the saintly ones,
That the oldest of them all would catch his breath
Remembering what it was to be alive!

Snowfall

Enchantment on the river
 And magic on the lake,
The world has turned to crystal,
 Don't speak or it will break!

The road seems new, the valley
 An unfamiliar place,
Where trees are trimmed with spangles
 And stones with silver lace.

A pink and white, furred rabbit
 With a star-tuft for a tail,
Hops up the hill by moonlight
 And leaves a fairy trail.

I think we mar the meadow
 So white, and smooth as suede,
We ought to shine in satin
 Or glitter in brocade.

Humiliation

How nakedly an animal
 Lies down on earth to die,
Unmindful of the shining air,
 And unashamed of sky.

But men and women under roofs
 Draw shades and hush the floor,
And furtively they lay their dead
 Behind a darkened door.

Idyll

Not the wise, quiet pine nor the amorous, blonde oak
 Nor the tall, pale, lady elm tree,
But you, who came invisible in a magic cloak,
 You, who were the wind, chose me.

I, the white little birch, who had stood alone, serene,
 Content to listen and to stare —
And I never saw your hands that tore my veils of green,
 Nor your lips that laughed in my hair.

You held me and kissed me, I knew your strength and grace
 And dreams rose like sap in the spring.
I trembled as with buds, but I never saw your face,
 I only heard you whispering.

So yawning and careless you went on to field and sea,
 So here I am lonely and still —
Oh wind, wind, better to have broken me
 Than leave me with roots in the hill.

Cobweb

It joins a dark pine to another tree;
And shining through its bones a ray of sun
Unearthed it like some graceful skeleton,
Or an unfinished frame of faery
As frail as words. Not even thought could be
More carefully, more delicately spun —
As fine a thread as that invisible one
Of speech and silence between you and me.

The spider lurks there blotched and poisonous.
He is the monstrous god who can at will
Belch beauty from a stomachful of spit;
And dreaming of that silver binding us,
Which Love unwinds and weaves, my heart grows still
And cries that Love is lovely — isn't it?

To Narcissus

I have no beauty that is all my own,
No special loveliness carved out of me,
No glowing images wrought perfectly,
Splendour of flesh or delicacy of bone.
I am a pool, wherein you shall be shown
How wonderful and starlike you can be,
I am a mirror so that you may see
Yourself most intimately and alone.
When you lean to me and a dear, swift grace
Sways in my body, and my lips and eyes
Grow suddenly and exquisitely calm —
Oh tremble and look deep into my face
And see your own there, marvel and grow wise,
Touch me and cry, " How beautiful I am! "

One Voice

You were the princess of the fairy tale
 Who spoke in emeralds instead of words,
Whose laughter left an exquisite, bright trail
 Of sounds as winged and visible as birds.

I never knew until yours went from me,
 That any voice could love my name so much,
That just to speak it made it seem to be
 A fragrance and a color and a touch.

My days are gestures of bewilderment,
 My nights are attitudes of listening,
For fear you may have whispered as you went,
 And I shall lose the starlike echoing.

Driftwood

Life gave me these —
The beauty that can only branch in trees
Who are content, knowing the roots' securities —
The strength to stand up straight and bear the wings
Of a brave ship on her adventurings —
The bitterness of being broken, being tossed
And driven on the waters and the winds, and lost
In desolation, mist and stinging foam,
And being beaten back at last to home.

Now love has kindled me —
Strange that my beauty of a dear, green tree
Should vanish into smoke and memory.
Strange that the strength, magnificently mine,
Should fall before the flame without a sign.
But oh most strange that bitterness should be
Drawn up in color after color out of me.

Windows

Today I have been washing windows
 Where storms have left their stain,
 And marks were made in loneliness
 By someone's fingers — mine, I guess —
 On the outside smear of rain,
 On the inside blur of pain.

I had forgotten that clean windows
 Can make such difference.
 That through a glass as clear as air,
 Landscapes seem painted on each square,
 That colors shapely and intense
 Can bring relief and recompense.

I've looked so long through darkened windows
 Where my own reflection peers,
 I had forgotten there might be
 Things outside myself to see —
 I wonder if your eyesight clears
 For better vision after tears.

In Love

No firefly more forlorn, more gravely strays
Among the glories of the morning tree
Than I, who glide almost invisibly
Where apple boughs are white as brides' bouquets.
Beneath the arches of the orchard ways,
Only one tulip, that I start to see,
As though my own heart had dropped out of me,
Seems to have guessed that I, too, am ablaze.

My blood is full of gleamings like seafoam,
My body brims with something of the moon
And shakes, as if with wings that would unfold.
So, after dark, I bar the doors of home,
Lest those, who think that I am grey at noon,
Should stare at night to see that I am gold.

Variation

Undesirous of a lover
 Daphne hid where cool ferns were —
And the kind god of the river
 With the flesh and blood of her
 Made a green tree lovelier.

What presence could fill a forest,
 Or footfall so fearful be,
That a god must rise in pity
 To change a quiet tree
 Into me?

With tears and a faithful heart and brave mirth,
Once on a time you watched to welcome me.
Waiting and weariness and agony
Until the last were what you thought me worth.
But wearier than the months that wait for birth
Are those that wait for death — How shall I be
Still while you are so still? How shall I see
Unbrokenhearted your slow steps from earth?

So the white watchers gather near to hark
The soul's approach, the heralding of the horn,
And so they strain and listen for the tread
Of the free soul retreating down the dark —
Mothers who wait for children to be born,
Children who wait for mothers to be dead.

Plaint

I too would run like Nicolette
Down aisles of rose and mignonette,
And stain my knees with midnight dew
Passing the ghostly gardens through,
If I should know that loverly
Young Aucassin awaited me!

And I could leave without regret
My warm white bed like Nicolette,
And flee from roof and candle-light
Into the deepest hour of night,
If by the ivy-shadowed wall,
I knew that Aucassin would call.

But I'll not tremble in the wet,
Nor bruise my feet like Nicolette,
Only to dream of his embrace,
Only to think I see his face,
Feel nothing sweeter on my mouth
Than heedless wind lips from the south,
Only to stand unloved, alone,
And listen to the fountain moan
From stone to unresponsive stone.

The Violin

Musician, give a voice to me!
 Oh quicken wood and string,
Unburden me of ecstasy,
 For I have songs to sing!

Of faces forward through dark rains,
 Of torn but valiant feet,
Of blood that runs in shrinking veins,
 Of broken hearts that beat.

Of crooked boughs that have kept true
 The promise to fulfill,
Of thwarted roots that yet pursue
 Their purpose in the hill.

Oh all you safe and smooth of heart
 Listen to song from me,
Whose wooden throat was once a part
 Of the north side of a tree!

Keepsake

You said they were brook trout —
Those fairy blades of sun and moonlight
You so gravely lifted out
One by one from your basket on the grass.
And I held up two handfuls
Of pink and green and white
For everyone to see,
And called the colors by a name,
Wood-anemone.

But of all those little dreams in cups
Left brimming over on the moss,
And of that big, breathless one
We leaned across
The fallen willow to give back again
To deep and shoal —
We never said a word,
We never told a soul!

A Child's Song to Her Mother

The lovely years went lightly by
 As April flowers go,
And often you would laugh or cry
 To see how I could grow.

The lonely years drift by in rain,
 As leaves in autumn do.
I long, when we shall meet again,
 To be as tall as you.

Threnody

I never have known anyone so proud,
So fierce for faith, so strong for nobleness.
I never heard you whine nor cry distress,
Nor saw you kneel nor knew your bright head bowed.
Dreams, Love and Laughter were a swift, white crowd
Of wings flashed upward from your loveliness,
You carried Truth, wore Honor as a dress
And wound yourself in Beauty like a cloud.

Surely this is not you who lies so low,
Smitten as others, yielding as they must
With abject hands and smooth, submissive head,
All fire and glory crumpled by one blow,
Bewildered and beaten and brought to dust,
This is not you, oh pitiful and dead!

Two Songs of Bitterness

I

Dear to me is Ruth, a bowl of crystal
 She brims her heart with laughter and I look
And see her clear as the dew on a cobweb,
 Or green water over white sand in a brook.

Mary is dearer, color and story
 Are wound in her and like soft cloths unfold,
And when she moves her footsteps are of silver,
 And where she will her touch can turn to gold.

Oh sweet as wine is laughter with the loving,
 And speech with the living good as bread,
But only with a ghost can I feast in silence,
 With Eunice, who is dearest, being dead.

The princess that I could not be,
The fairy that was not for me,
The game begun and never ended,
The castle dreamed, the play pretended,
The note unsung, the word unspoken,
Whatever I have lost and broken,
My doll, my heart, my promises,
All these things Eunice is —
When I lie down with her to rest,
I'll find my dearest and my best
Safe in her dust beneath the sod,
Kept fair and clear and written plain,
And then I shall believe again
In elves and knights and love and God.

To a Mocking-Bird

I was asleep, dreaming that I could see
The north hills bowed and burdened with the snow,
And the grey-bearded river old and slow,
And the sick silences on vine and tree —
When in upon my loneliness and me
Light rushed, and sweetness tumbled down as though
Windows had opened for white hands to throw
Roses and roses from a balcony.

Oh Bird, imperious for happiness,
For moments gold as arrows in the air,
I am the only dark in all daybreak!
Let loose your avalanche of loveliness
Over my heart, until I am aware
How long I sleep — and sing me wide awake!

Gesture

My arms were always quiet,
 Close, and never freed.
I was furled like a banner,
 Enfolded like a seed.

I thought, when Love shall strike me,
 Each arm will start and spring,
Unloosen like a petal,
 And open like a wing.

Oh Love — my arms are lifted,
 But not to sway and toss;
They strain out wide and wounded,
 Like arms upon a cross.

Language

I made new speech for you, a secret tongue,
Dearest and best of all in book or scroll —
To hear it spoken was to hear it sung,
I copied all of it upon my soul.
There were those leafy letters, wreathed like vines,
Such trellises of words as Sappho spoke —
Heavy as silver flagons of old wines
Some Latin phrases carved by stately folk.
I could not find a sound for leavetakings
Slower, more sorrowful than Spanish is,
And the French names with flower-dusty wings
Flew in and out among the sentences.
So with my heart a voice made musical,
I went to you and did not speak at all.

A Tree at Dawn

I know that day will come for I have seen
Under the sky three silver threads unravelling,

The blackness whispers of green —

A sound becomes a glimmering
And waters waken.

White from her sleep the Lily prays —

A fragrance sways
Where the grass is shaken.

And as the last hour listens, lingering,
Deep in my heart the Voice begins to sing.

A Tree at Dusk

With secrets in their eyes the blue-winged Hours
Rustle through the meadow
Dropping shadow.

Yawning among red flowers,
The Moon Child with her golden hoop
And a pink star drifting after,
Leans to me where I droop.

I hear her delicate, soft laughter,
And through my hair her tiny fingers creep. . . .

I shall sleep.

Love Song from New England

In every solemn tree the wind
 Has rung a little lonesome bell,
As sweet and clear, as cool and kind
 As my voice bidding you farewell.

This is an hour that gods have loved
 To snatch with bare, bright hands and hold.
Mine, with a gesture, grey and gloved,
 Dismiss it from me in the cold.

Closely as some dark-shuttered house
 I keep my light. How should you know,
That as you turn beneath brown boughs,
 My heart is breaking in the snow?

Trespasser

I am among the careless dead
 Who do not rise to see
Why I should hurry through their flowers
 Beneath their willow tree,
Nor lift their hands from off their breasts
 To beckon me.

But though I run so lightly through
 The myrtle's rambling mass,
And though my feet step silently
 Above the blowing grass,
And though they do not stir or speak —
 They know I pass.

Moonflower

I can not be a banner swift and gay,
A yellow glory or a scarlet flight,
Superbly opening upward into light —
While some are waving scarves I only pray.
I am the one who hides her heart by day,
Who does not dare to rise and blossom white
Until the lovely moment before night,
The interval of lavendar and grey.
So love me delicately as the rain
Fingers the leaves. Hold me as if asleep —
Nor waken me with some too terrible
Dear call or kiss, lest, stricken with the pain
Of your close-beating heart, my heart should leap
And break, finding the world too beautiful!

Surf

Here are gardens growing, ruining in the deep,
 Where the frail foam pauses, then topples and unturns
 Forever and forever, wonderful white ferns,
Where feathers fly in colors and lights like lizards creep,

Where the twining, white ivy shrivels and is rolled
 Glamorous and blowing into fragment and flake
 Beneath enormous orchids that only bloom to break,
To crumble into smoke and turn to opal mould.

And some waves like children — each one alight, alone —
 Hurry up the pathway and point and hesitate,
 Their torn blue ruffles tossing around them as they wait,
As they turn and tiptoe seaward over shell and stone.

So it is that wonderings flow in and out of me —
 Like little bells and tassels of foam along a beach
 They dream and sigh and whisper, whimper and reach
For peace withdrawn as softly as sand from the sea.

The Misers

We were so fearful lest we give too much
And thereby wrench the sweetness from the song,
Trembled to look too deep or kiss too long,
And stood aloof when we yearned most to touch.

Oh had we been content, less passionate
For Love's eternity we had not lost
The least of Love's eternal hours, whose cost
We never dreamed until it was too late.

So was life stripped of even memories
To meet that time when we had no desire,
That day we looked and turned away shamed eyes,
Seeing but ashes where had once been fire.

No splendid shadows of a well-lost heaven,
But tearful ghosts of kisses never given.

Lifetime

I am the river, I have been immense
With hope, great as the inner heart of spring —
The reeds have huddled to my whimpering
Amid the noon-time's staleness and suspense.
Between the ruins of magnificence,
Stained and autumnal, mournfully I sing,
And then among my white beards muttering
Grow old, and sleep into indifference.
I have no returning, onward is best,
Close to the dark, sweet earth in every place,
But with the sky's mark hidden in my breast,
And a star's shadow falling on my face.
Where shining spaces wait to fill with me,
Death is the beautiful and bitter sea.

Communion

With delicate, white hands the priest has laid
His usual blessing on the wine and bread,
And to each broken figure, each bent head,
The symbol brought, the silver cup conveyed.
The candles peer, uneasy and afraid,
Like small, grey faces from the mournful dead,
And up and down the aisles the organ's dread
And doubt and grief and gravity have strayed.

Softly the stained glass windows split apart,
Their ineffectual angels pine and pass —
I am upright and proud. Whom I seek now
Sudden and sure as dawn breaks in my heart —
And I tread stars as intimately as grass,
Touch light as though it were a golden bough.

Talisman

He was a little boy and gentle,
With the dim look in his eyes
Of one accustomed to a temple
And speech there with the wise.

He went the adventurous way of beauty
And passed unharmed without distress,
And learned a secret for unlocking
The spells of ugliness.

He knew, like someone in a legend,
The magic in the lowliest things,
That stones are golden coaches really,
And frogs are fairy kings.

So when Death came, he saw her coming
With a tall star in her hand,
And turned from life as from enchantment
At the waving of her wand.

Sympathy

While all of you are bringing milk and bread
And stroking me and saying I must rest,
Remembrance beats like black wings in my head,
And wolfish grief is clawing in my breast.

I know that you are kind, that you mean well,
And thanking you so quietly I seem
So comforted that you could never tell
I'm wondering why it is I do not scream.

Oh crucify me! Nail my hands and feet!
Strike in and turn the torture of a knife
Heart-deep to loose my blood and take my breath —
Pain would be good and suffering seem sweet.
But keep your love for those who still love life,
And do not feed me who am starved to death.

Nocturne

I have grown pale and paler
 Since one went away,
Who passed from me as softly
 As daylight leaves the day.

My hair has lost its gleaming,
 The light has left my face,
I am a grey-eyed wanderer
 In any lonely place.

And on my heart is moonlight
 Like white rain on the sea,
And I am of the evening
 As the evening is of me.

A gentle moan, remembrance,
 A folded wing is love,
Since my dream stepped into shadow
 On the soft feet of a dove.

Now when thoughts of him arise
 And open in my soul,
They are frailer than white roses
 In a silver bowl.

The Child

The linden bough above the garden wall,
The pleasant meadow and the pretty brook,
What miles of dream they spread, what torrents shook,
What majesty they wore when I was small!
Since I am grown they are not so at all.
Absurd and dear as fairies in a book,
They fade and dwindle and will never look
Mighty again to me for I am tall.

I shall grow taller, sometime I shall be
Shoulder to shoulder with the full-grown cloud,
And, looking down on life and death and birth,
As I do now on grasses or a tree,
Remembering myself shall laugh aloud
And think, "Oh little Grief! Oh foolish Earth!"

My Heart Can't Break

My heart can't break but closes like a flower
That waits in windless places for the day,
Until the arrowy dawn finds some swift way
To pierce its paleness with a gleaming hour.

And when at last I look without offense
Through windows and in mirrors that were yours,
The stranger shadow in them reassures
My heart that it has learned indifference.

So hour and hour and hour and dark and light
Go rustling softly by as women do,
Trailing complacence in a silken dress.

Until, crying with loneliness some night,
I wake from that old dream of losing you
To find my hands closed tight on emptiness.

Portrait of a Lady at the Piano

She spoke assent, decisively and clear,
Flashed to her seat, flame-eyed and shining-lipped,
As though she were a crystal that had slipped
Down from the brilliance of the chandelier.
Her hands glittered — We thought that we could hear
Icewater on white marble as it dripped,
Or yards of pale, blue satin deftly ripped
To shreds, or falling fragments of a spear.

Is there not anywhere deep down in her
One long, soft note to penetrate this blur
Of splintered music? Do bright, broken things
Litter her soul, or has she somewhere stored
In secret purple, like warm evenings,
The steady darkness of some perfect chord?

I've Lived So Long

I've lived so long companionless
In this old house bowed down with years,
I've learned to welcome loneliness,
Converse with dreams and sit with fears.

Often and often in the night
When I have laid some dull book down,
One comes between me and the light
With terrible, unrustling gown.

Wistful as moonlight in the room
Her face sways, luminous with fire
Of eyes unsmothered by the tomb,
Of lips remembering still desire.

And there beside the lute she stands
With mournful little motionings,
And stretches out her pulseless hands
And only thrusts them through the strings.

No way to bring her longing near
Who has no heart to beat and break,
Nor any way that she can hear
The sound her lost touch can not make.

Oh who will sit here wondering
Some other night and watch me steal
Close to an unforgotten thing
With hands that reach but do not feel?

Realities

When I stand listening in my heart at night,
I hear them leaping through the loneliness
Ringing their colored bells, and less and less
I grieve as they come flashing into sight.
The lover Dreams run first, boy-like and bright,
Then lusty Ghosts and ruddy Fairies press
And crowd to kiss my hair or touch my dress,
Substantial as the stars, as real as light.

My heart grows dark with the returning day,
And flames no more, but flickers and grows faint.
Faces fade by me in a ghostly stream,
Voices of people are a faroff plaint.
I move uncertainly, and grope my way
Among them, like a shadow or a dream.

Setting for a Fairy Story

This is a lonesome place.
The water is as peaceful as a face,
That moods have smoothed and dreams made exquisite.
And where your paddle gleams and slips,
It seems as if one sighed and closed his lips.
And softly and as sly
As ghostly cats, the long white mists prowl by.
Oh I can tell
We are not wanted here! There is some spell
Those dwarfs of trees, who squat around the lake,
Are squinting through the dusk to see us break.
So desolate a place . . . so full of wonder. . . .
Now near, and far, and over us and under,
A million million frogs entreat.
Their thin, entangled threads of voices meet
And mingle with the tree-toads', jarring sweet
And whirring strong as tiny motors might.
And leader of them all far down the night,
One huge, wet-bellied, moss-mouthed crier
Twangs like a taut bronze wire.
The way grows narrower, the voices less.
Only the water-lilies in distress
Hold up their horrified white hands, and cling
Close to each other shuddering.
And I am troubled by their breath,
That smells of mystery, or sleep, or death.

And was it death or sleep or mystery,
That slew the knighthood in so brave a tree,
And left him torn to bowels, stripped to bone,
Abject and mutilated and alone?
His body, broken but still marvellous,
Darkens and bars the way for us.
And so we leave our boat and move
Timidly through a fearsome grove,
Where witches' shadows huddle as we go —
It ends — as sudden as a blow.
And here are blesséd, blue-lit spaces!
The fireflies everywhere,
Like tips of wands are waving in the air.
And we can see our faces
Dimly, like faces in a well.
So quieted beneath that star,
We have forgotten that there was a spell,
And kiss, and laugh to find how real we are!
And then, as if she heard our laughter,
And longed to tiptoe after,
Amazingly alone and still,
And very fairy-queenlike on the hill,
The moon uprises, darling as of old.
So we go home, resplendent in her gold,
Safe in her glory,
And happy as the ending of a story.

Mount Misery Brook

Climb

My shoes fall on the house-top that is so far beneath me,
I have hung my hat forever on the sharp church spire,
Now what shall seem the hill but a moment of surmounting,
The height but a place to dream of something higher!

Wings? Oh not for me, I need no other pinions
Than the beating of my heart within my breast;
Wings are for the dreamer with a bird-like longing,
Whose dreams come home at eventide to nest.

The timid folk beseech me, the wise ones warn me,
They say that I shall never grow to stand so high;
But I climb among the hills of cloud and follow vanished lightning,
I shall stand knee-deep in thunder with my head against the sky.

Tiptoe, at last, upon a pinnacle of sunset,
I shall greet the death-like evening with laughter from afar,
Nor tremble in the darkness nor shun the windy midnight,
For by the evening I shall be a star.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 015 873 963 A